

LIFERAFT REPACKING ISSUE - USE OF IMPROPER TAPE TO SEAL CONTAINER

APRIL – 2003

Good afternoon,

Wanted to pass on a problem that has shown itself a couple of times out here in Dutch Harbor now.

Problem: At least one liferaft repacker was using improper (i.e. too strong) tape to seal liferaft containers. This tape was placed over the plug that seals the sea painter entry/exit point in the cannister. Also, the knot typically tied on the sea painter just inside the plug (through which the liferaft sea painter passes) was not tied.

1. The tape was really the critical issue - you could actually lift the liferaft in it's cannister by lifting up on the sea painter - the plug did not pull out as it was supposed to, allowing the sea painter to freely pay out. This was due to the fact that an industrial grade reinforced heat shrink tape was used and was installed over the plug. Had this liferaft been deployed in it's original condition, the liferaft would have floated free of the boat, but since the sea painter would not pay out, the liferaft would not have inflated.

2. Lack of a knot behind the plug - the knot allows the plug to be pulled out as the sea painter pays out - allowing the sea painter to pay out freely and avoid jamming/tangling inside the cannister. The plug in this case is a hard rubber style that will not break apart as some of the foam ones do if pulled with any tension. If the hard rubber plug remained in the side of the liferaft cannister, it would really be easy for the painter line to tangle and jam inside the cannister, stopping the line from paying out and the liferaft from ultimately inflating.

Solution: Pay particular attention to the type of tape (if used) on the liferaft cannister. If it impedes the plug & painter from operating as it should (i.e. easily coming out), then it should be removed from the vicinity of the plug & painter. In all cases, the fishing vessel crew did not notice this as they had assumed that the repacker had done the right thing.

In these cases, the repacker has been notified of the problem - but there may be a number of liferafts still out there that were improperly taped up along the West Coast.

Here are pictures of one of the problem liferafts to help you visualize the problem:



LT Joe Higgins

Supervisor, MSD Unalaska

907-581-3466

907-581-3468 fax

jhiggins@cgalaska.uscg.mil

Dutch Harbor - your #1 Aleutian Vacation Destination!